

Initial Proposals for the Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area - Consultation Summary Report

Purpose

This paper outlines the key outcomes of the public consultation on the initial proposals for the Regional Cooperation Plan on Building a Quality Living Area (the Plan) for reference by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

Background

2. At the 11th Plenary of the Hong Kong-Guangdong Cooperation Joint Conference in August 2008, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Governor of Guangdong agreed that joint strategies would be drawn up to transform the Greater Pearl River Delta (PRD) region into a low-carbon, high-technology and low-pollution city cluster of quality living. This important strategic initiative was subsequently embraced in the “Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (PRD) (2008-2020)” released in January 2009, the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Cooperation signed in April 2010, the Framework Agreement on Macao/Guangdong Cooperation signed in March 2011, and also the “Outline of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China” promulgated in March 2011. To facilitate the implementation of this strategic initiative, the governments of Guangdong Province, the HKSAR and the Macao SAR jointly commenced a study for the compilation of the Plan in October 2009, focusing on the long-term regional cooperation directions of the Greater PRD region.

3. Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao jointly launched a three-month public consultation starting from 1 September 2011 on the initial proposals for the Plan. The three sides jointly compiled the consultation document and its summary (available in simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese and English) and developed a joint dedicated website (available in simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese and English) to provide relevant background information on the study and a series of public consultation documents for downloading, to release information about the public consultation activities, and to provide channels for members of the public to share their views. During the public consultation period, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao held a series of public fora and related consultation meetings and activities (see **Annex 1** for details), including:

- (i) Guangdong side: seminars for government departments;
- (ii) Hong Kong side: meetings with the Hong Kong Advisory Council on the Environment and the Hong Kong Greater Pearl River Delta (GPRD) Business Council, expert forum, meetings with the Hong Kong Legislative

Council Panel on Environmental Affairs, business associations, green groups and other related organisations; and

(iii) Macao side: seminars for the government departments and meeting with the Macao Advisory Council on the Environment.

Apart from the above engagements, members of the public of the three places can also forward their comments to the leading bureaux of the three sides via different channels including website (www.gprd-qla.com), mail, e-mail or fax.

Key Findings of Public Consultation

Overall Response

4. The various community sectors of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao provided a wide range of comments and suggestions during the three-month public consultation period. The Guangdong Province received 16 written submissions (**Annex 2**); Hong Kong received 72 written submissions (**Annex 3**); and Macao received 4 written submissions (**Annex 4**). Most respondents supported the initiative of jointly compiling a regional plan by the three sides. Respondents also pointed out that the consultation document had set a wide vision and the Greater PRD region is presented with massive opportunities and potential for cooperation. The respondents have urged the three governments to take joint action so that the region will become a sustainable quality living area. Some respondents have also expressed enthusiasm for the Plan's implementation and anticipated that the three governments could formulate specific action plans and monitoring systems. Some respondents had put forward specific comments and suggestions on the areas of improving environment and ecology, promoting low-carbon development, optimising regional land use, and facilitating green transportation systems, culture and social living. The written submissions and views collected from consultation meetings/fora are summarised as follows:

Improving the Regional Environmental and Ecological Quality

Strengthening and improving the ecosystems

5. Respondents generally agreed with the idea that the three sides should take joint action to protect the ecosystem and natural resources in the Greater PRD region, and they were in support of the proposals on cooperation in ecological protection and conservation of Chinese White Dolphins in the consultation document. Specific recommendations targeting at individual cooperation proposals were also put forward, particularly in strengthening ecological links among ecological hot spots and key ecological hinterlands in the region; accelerating the designation of Robin's Nest (in the Hong Kong Frontier Closed Area) as a country park; strengthening the joint conservation of the Pearl River Estuary, especially in fostering closer cooperation in conservation of Chinese White Dolphins living there; enhancing biodiversity

protection by formulating a detailed action plan through further discussion among the three sides and carrying out ecological restoration work on wildlife habitats. Respondents also suggested the inclusion of specific topics in in-depth studies on cooperation in ecological protection among the three sides. Topics suggested including investigation in ecological restoration of the Pearl River Estuary's marine ecosystem as well as formulation of protection strategies for the Nansha-Qiao-"Cotai, Coloane-Taipa"-Hengqin bird-migration passage. Other recommendations included a review of the impact of the Qianhai reclamation works on the enhancement of the restoration and conservation of Futian and Deep Bay wetlands.

Improving water quality of the Pearl River Basin and Estuary

6. Most respondents supported the idea of undertaking joint measures to improve the water environment of the Pearl River Basin and Estuary. The respondents also proposed commencing a study on the pollution load carrying capacity of the Pearl River Estuary, strengthening cooperation in scientific research on industrial and rural/town wastewater treatment technologies, and adopting the concept of "integrated river management", etc. Regarding water resource issues, some respondents suggested actively considering of expanding scientific researches and pilot programmes on water resources, such as seawater desalination, reclaimed water reuse, etc.

Improving regional air quality

7. Most respondents recognised that to tackle the air pollution problems in the Greater PRD region, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao should continue to cooperate closely in implementing emission reduction measures. Most opinions supported further enhancing air quality management and raising relevant control standards. Some respondents suggested raising motor vehicle fuel and emission standards, using biofuels in motor vehicles and designating Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao as a "low-emission zone". Some respondents opined that the HKSAR government should expedite the process to draw up with the Guangdong government an emission reduction plan for the PRD region and Hong Kong up to 2020 as well as actively review and tighten the Hong Kong Air Quality Objectives.

Controlling air pollutant emissions from vessels in the Greater PRD waters

8. Regarding the pollution caused by vessels, major stakeholders suggested the governments of HKSAR and the PRD to regulate vessels berthing in the PRD waters to use low-sulphur fuels before expiration of the Fair Wind Charter, and urged the governments to provide incentives for the trades to encourage wider participation in this programme. The governments must also consider the impacts of these measures on the trades, examine and discuss with the trades any new measures in the pipelines. Most respondents supported that the governments should control vessel emissions according to the requirements of Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). They also supported exploring the

establishment of an “Emission Control Area” in the Greater PRD waters to reduce emission from vessels.

Promoting Regional Low-carbon Development

Low-carbon development cooperation mechanism

9. Most respondents agreed with and supported the low-carbon development direction of the Greater PRD region and considered that a cooperation mechanism should be established. They also expressed that it was necessary for the three governments to cooperate closely to define the meaning, target and evaluation method of low-carbon development; strengthen technological research and policy formulation; and promote a low-carbon economy and low-carbon city development in order to support regional prosperity and quality living. Some respondents were of the view that Hong Kong should formulate long-term policies to combat climate change. More specific views were related to carbon trading, carbon audit, low-carbon certification system, building energy efficiency, green procurement and measures to combat climate change. Some respondents suggested using “ecological footprint” to assess Hong Kong’s performance on carbon emissions.

Raising the level of clean production in the region

10. Most respondents expressed strong support to continue advancing the Cleaner Production Partnership Programme and to enhance regional cooperation in cleaner production. Relevant views called for the government to extend the time limit of the Cleaner Production Partnership Programme as well as allocate more resources for the programme to encourage factory owners to implement cleaner production measures and to make continuous improvement, etc. Some respondents suggested that a standardized energy-saving and emission-reduction indicator system applicable to Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao should be formulated, and manufacturers should be required to conduct mandatory lifecycle analysis for their products.

Facilitating development of environmental industries

11. On cooperation in environmental industries, the majority of respondents suggested the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao to cooperate and work closely with industry, and to formulate appropriate policies to facilitate the development and establishment of quality branding for the environmental industries. Some respondents suggested the Guangdong government to establish an accreditation system and to lower the entry requirements for the environmental service sector outside Guangdong to access to the market there. It was also hoped that the Hong Kong government would allocate more resources to help Hong Kong companies in the Greater PRD region to upgrade and transform themselves. Some respondents considered it necessary for the Guangdong and Hong Kong governments to overcome the existing constraints so as to put cross-boundary cooperation in recycling reusable materials into effect. Others suggested that cities in the Greater PRD region should

focus on developing food waste treatment.

Developing new and renewable energy

12. The majority of respondents supported the development and application of new and renewable energy. Their major proposals included strengthening Hong Kong-Guangdong cooperation to jointly take forward the development and application of renewable energy, under which Hong Kong would introduce foreign technologies while leveraging on Guangdong's manufacturing base. Some respondents suggested promoting the development of "waste to energy". They also advocated greater efforts on green transportation and suggested providing subsidies to encourage the use of vehicles meeting higher emission control standards, and providing supporting facilities such as charging stations. Respondents also recommended that the three places should agree on a set of common standards for green transportation and new energy vehicles, and coordinate the respective supporting facilities for electric vehicles.

Developing clean energy supply and related infrastructure

13. On clean energy cooperation, some respondents proposed that the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao worked together to provide an exchange platform for regional clean energy research institutes and enterprises, such as organising regular fora and seminars to promote new technologies. Others suggested that priority should be given to the construction of a regional natural gas supply network, which would not only raise the efficiency of power generation but also benefit the development of supply networks for methane and biofuels. Some respondents also pointed out that the use of nuclear power should be considered in formulating energy policies.

Taking Forward Regional Cooperation in Culture and Livelihood Issues

Cross-boundary cultural exchange

14. On cross-boundary cultural exchange, respondents suggested that Hong Kong should draw on its advantages to facilitate cultural exchange in the region, with a view to jointly promoting the distinct culture of the three places. Some respondents also proposed celebrating festivals common to the three places.

Cross-boundary cooperation in education

15. On cross-boundary cooperation in education, the majority of respondents in general had no objection to the cooperation direction and initiatives proposed in the Plan. Some suggested that universities in Hong Kong and Macao could establish independent Mainland branches to introduce the Hong Kong vocational training system and jointly develop vocational education. The public also put forward other proposals such as joint mentor schemes, exchange programme for teachers, enhanced

convergence in the primary and secondary education curricula and student places, deepening of collaboration between sister schools and in higher education. Respondents from Macao also made other suggestions including free admission to the patriotic education bases in Guangdong for the students from Hong Kong and Macao, and reserving land in the “Guangdong-Macao Hengqin Cooperation Project” for developing secondary and primary education, etc.

Cross-boundary cooperation in social welfare

16. On cross-boundary cooperation in social welfare, respondents hoped there would be more communication and exchanges regarding social-welfare organisations and systems, etc. Tertiary institutions in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao were encouraged to provide training for social work and social services personnel. On the issue of Hong Kong and Macao setting up cross-boundary social-welfare organisations, the respondents hoped for innovative initiatives to realise the goals of “setting up social-welfare organisations” and “facilitating training and exchanges”. Some respondents proposed that the governments of the three places should provide more preferential measures to non-profit-making social-welfare organisations, and that the Hong Kong government should extend the old-age social security to retired Hong Kong seniors living in the Mainland.

Cooperation in Food safety

17. On cooperation in food safety, respondents suggested conducting food safety planning in the Greater PRD region and examining the feasibility of urban agriculture. Some respondents proposed raising of food safety standards, and harmonisation of food testing standards in the region, and that the market for food testing business should be opened to Hong Kong or Macao enterprises.

Taking Forward the Coordination of Regional Spatial Development

18. Some respondents considered that specific action plans and detailed arrangements should be given for the implementation of the objectives and details regarding the coordination of regional spatial development to address the issues such as the impacts of transit-oriented development (TOD) on built-up areas, urban complexes, urban quality improvement, waterfront leisure zone and greenway, etc. Respondents also expressed concern over those cross-boundary cooperation areas such as Nansha in Guangzhou, Lok Ma Chau Loop, Qianhai in Shenzhen and Hengqin, and suggested that more in-depth deliberation should be made on the cross-boundary living needs, especially the direct and far-reaching implications on population, industry and cross-boundary links.

Facilitating Development of Green Transportation and Convenient Boundary Crossing

19. In respect of facilitating green transportation and convenient boundary

crossing, respondents supported the initial proposals on planned development of rail transport, public transport, non-motorised traffic, etc. They also expressed concerns about issues in regional green transportation, including energy efficiency and emission reduction as well as development of electric vehicles. Some respondents had strong aspiration for further facilitation of convenient boundary crossing. Suggestions included shortening waiting time, operating more immigration counters during peak hours, providing additional Guangdong-Macao 24-hour boundary crossing and more convenient cross-boundary facilities at control points such as Gongbei.

Implementation and Timetable of the Plan

20. In the course of the public consultation, many respondents expressed enthusiasm for the Plan's implementation and anticipated that the governments of the three places could formulate specific action plans and monitoring systems. Some respondents called for appropriate systems to oversee the implementation of various cooperation projects.

Other Comments and Suggestions

21. Apart from providing specific comments and suggestions on improving the environment and ecology, promoting low-carbon development, optimising regional land use, facilitating green transportation systems, as well as culture and social living, some respondents also raised proposals on the overall cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. Relevant suggestions included providing consistent strategies, systems and standards for the three places. In respect of environmental policy, respondents also requested full compliance with the standards of EU and WHO and the conducting of strategic environmental impact assessment for the planned major development projects in the Greater PRD region. Some respondents suggested establishing quantitative indicators and setting up relevant assessment mechanisms for the proposals relating to "quality living".

22. Moreover, there were some comments and suggestions focusing mainly on local work of Guangdong, Hong Kong or Macao, and comments not falling within the five major cooperation areas stipulated in the consultation document. There were also views or information just for reference by the government of the three places. All these comments and information have been referred to the relevant bureaux/departments of the three places for separate consideration and follow-up, and they are not reflected in this consultation summary report.

**List of Public Consultation Activities held in
Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao**

Date	Place	Activity
19 September 2011	Hong Kong	Briefing for the Hong Kong Advisory Council on the Environment
22 September 2011	Guangzhou	Seminar for the departments of Guangdong Provincial Government
24 September 2011	Macao	Public forum in Macao
26 September 2011	Macao	Seminar for the departments of Macao Government Meeting with the Macao Advisory Council on the Environment
28 September 2011	Hong Kong	Briefing for the Greater Pearl River Delta Business Council
4 October 2011	Hong Kong	Public forum in Hong Kong
7 October 2011	Hong Kong	Expert forum in Hong Kong
24 October 2011	Hong Kong	Briefing to the Hong Kong Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs
7 November 2011	Hong Kong	Briefing for the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce
8 November 2011	Hong Kong	Discussion with WWF Hong Kong
12 November 2011	Hong Kong	Briefing for the Central Policy Unit
18 November 2011	Hong Kong	Discussion with Friends of the Earth (HK)
6 December 2011	Guangzhou	Public forum in Guangdong
29 December 2011	Hong Kong	Discussion with Civic Exchange

List of Respondents of the Public Consultation in Guangdong Province¹

1. Chinese White Dolphin Provincial Nature Reserve
2. Pearl River Estuary Chinese White Dolphin National Nature Reserve
3. Other respondents (Note: a total of 14 written submissions)

¹ The list is not inclusive of all the respondents from the public forum in Guangdong.

List of Respondents of the Public Consultation in Hong Kong²

Professional Associations

1. Hong Kong Institute of Planners
2. The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers

Trades, Trade Associations and Business Associations

3. The “Star” Ferry Company, Limited
4. Hong Kong Shipowners Association
5. Hong Kong Liner Shipping Association
6. The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong
7. The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce
8. The Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
9. Climate Change Business Forum
10. Hong Kong Productivity Council
11. Maersk Line
12. Energy Environment Solutions
13. The Airport Authority Hong Kong
14. The British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
15. The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
16. Federation of Hong Kong Industries

Community Groups

17. Designing Hong Kong
18. The Climate Group
19. Hong Kong Bird Watching Society
20. The Professional Commons
21. Community Development Initiative
22. Civic Exchange (Note: a total of 2 written submissions)
23. Harbour Business Forum
24. Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Green Groups

25. The Conservancy Association
26. Friends of the Earth (HK) (Note: a total of 2 written submissions)
27. Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden Corporation

² The list is not inclusive of all the respondents from the public forum, expert forum and briefings to advisory bodies in Hong Kong.

28. WWF Hong Kong

Members of the Public

29. Individuals (Note: a total of 25 members of the public provided written submissions)

Internet Forum

30. Public Affairs Forum (Note: a total of 12 members of the Public Affairs Forum provided written submissions)

Others

31. Other respondents (Note: a total of 5 written submissions)

List of Respondents of the Public Consultation in Macao³

1. Macao Heritage Ambassadors Association
2. 大炮台山街坊會
3. Individuals (Note: a total of 1 written submission)
4. Other respondents (Note: a total of 1 written submission)

³ The list is not inclusive of all the respondents from the public forum in Macao and the meeting with the Macao Advisory Council on the Environment.